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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 000268

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE AND NEA/I;
BAGHDAD: PLEASE PASS TO PRTS ERBIL AND NINEWA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/06/2020
TAGS: PREL, PTER, PINR, MARR, TU, IZ
SUBJECT: USF-I COMMANDING GENERAL ODIERNO'S MEETING WITH
FOREIGN MINISTER DAVUTOGLU

REF: ANKARA 38

Classified By: AMB James Jeffrey; reasons 1.4(b,d)

1. (C) SUMMARY: During his February 4 meeting with USF-I Commanding General Raymond Odierno, Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoglu reiterated Interior Minister Besir Atalay's request, made in a separate meeting earlier that day, that USF-I work with Turkey to develop "a calendarized common action plan" to remove the terrorist Kurdistan Workers Party's (PKK) leadership from northern Iraq. Davutoglu identified Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) collaboration as crucial to the plan's development. He pressed for American intervention with Barzani to secure his tangible cooperation against the PKK. Odierno said the PKK is not only a threat to Turkey but a risk to stability within Iraq itself. He added he wants to build the Iraqi government and KRG's capabilities to partner with Turkey against the PKK. He urged an early joint Turkish-KRG focus on cutting PKK funding and logistics and the building of actionable arrest warrants against PKK leaders that could be executed by Iraqi authorities. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) During his February 4 meeting at the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs with USF-I Commanding General Raymond Odierno, Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoglu reiterated Interior Minister Besir Atalay's request, made in a separate meeting earlier that day (SEPTTEL), that USF-I work with Turkey to develop "a calendarized common action plan" to remove the terrorist PKK leadership from northern Iraq. Davutoglu emphasized the importance of KRG collaboration to the action plan's development. He reported KRG President Massoud Barzani's positive response to Davutoglu's request for tangible KRG support against the PKK when the two met in Erbil at the end of October; however, he added, the KRG needs American encouragement to do the right thing: "They need to hear it from you." Davutoglu promised, if the KRG helps Turkey, "we will pay them back 10 times."

3. (SBU) Davutoglu described Iraq as "an existential issue for Turkey." Not only because it harbors the constant threat of PKK violence against Turks, but because "it is a microcosm of the region" of which Turkey is a part. Elaborating, he said, Iraq contains Shia, Sunnis, Kurds, Turkmen, Christians and other ethnic groups; their attempt to coexist peacefully within one state and nation must succeed. "The experiment must work there," if it fails, he implied, the ramification for the region is disaster. Mindful of that ramification, he said: "For the last seven years, we have been only a constructive contributor to Iraq." Turkey established a

bilateral high-level strategic cooperation council with the Gol in 2007. Prime Minister Erdogan followed that up last October when he led an eight-person ministerial team to Baghdad to sign 48 MoUs and agreements with Iraqi counterparts that provide the legal basis for bilateral cooperation in fields ranging from counter-terrorism and commerce to water management, health care and the environment. By working hard for stability in Iraq, he concluded, Turkey is "a source of stability in the region."

4. (C) As a stability-generator, he continued, Turkey's goals for Iraq and the region are entirely consistent with those of the United States. More than that, he contended, Turkey's geography is essential to the attainment of American goals for Iraq: "Just look at a map to see how important we are." In return, he said, we want an end to the threat to our security emanating from northern Iraq. "Before your withdrawal, it is our common responsibility to eliminate this threat."

ANKARA 00000268 002 OF 003

5. (C) Odierno replied the PKK is not only a threat to Turkey, but a risk to stability within Iraq itself. He reminded Davutoglu the American military presence in Iraq would continue for two years beyond the August 31 cessation of USF-I's combat operations. We want to leave in place an Iraqi government and KRG that are partners to you, he said. We have more work to do to build their counter-terrorism capability. Through them, we can work with you over the next two years to reduce the PKK. He stressed, however, combat power alone is unlikely to eliminate the PKK leadership's presence in northern Iraq. He lauded the Democratic Opening, an evolving package of domestic economic development programs and ethnic rights concessions designed to reduce the alienation of some southeastern Turkish Kurds from their state, as a crucial step towards providing opportunity for economically disadvantaged Turkish Kurds who might otherwise succumb to PKK recruitment. He urged a joint Turkish-KRG focus on cutting PKK funding and logistics and the building of actionable arrest warrants against PKK leaders that could be executed by Iraqi authorities.

6. (S) Davutoglu recalled the October 2007 PKK attack on the Turkish army outpost at Daglica near the Iraq border in which 12 soldiers were killed and eight taken prisoner as a turning point in USG cooperation with Turkey against the terrorists. (NOTE: Subsequent to this attack, the USG began providing

intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance support to Turkish military operations against the PKK in northern Iraq.) He said the parliamentary opposition had called for military action against the KRG. "We did the opposite. We could have destroyed Erbil, but we didn't. Instead, we increased our economic interdependence with the KRG." In return for Turkey's forbearance, he implied, the KRG should help interdict PKK leaders' movements within northern Iraq. Last August, he alleged, Turkish intelligence learned the KRG had provided the terrorist organization's European representatives with transportation from "the airport to Qandil for the PKK congress. We could give you the license plates." Your pressure on Barzani, he said, can get him to stop this kind of activity. "Perhaps the KRG won't fight the PKK," but your intervention can get them to cease their outright support for the terrorists. We look forward, Davutoglu said, to coordinating with you soon in Baghdad.

7. (C) Odierno renewed his appreciation for Turkey's facilitation of USF-I's logistics lines through Incirlik Air Base and Habur Gate. He confirmed his willingness to work with Turkey in its effort to secure effective cooperation with the KRG and GoI against the PKK.

8. (U) Participants:

U.S.

General Raymond Odierno
Ambassador James Jeffrey
Ambassador Cameron Munter, Minister Counselor,
Political-Military Affairs, Embassy Baghdad
Major General Theodore Nicholas, J-2, USF-I
Major General Steven Hummer, J-3, USF-I
Emma Sky, Political Advisor, USF-I
Jeremiah Howard, Deputy Political Counselor, Embassy Ankara -
Notetaker

Turkey

Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoglu
Ambassador Murat Ozcelik, Embassy Baghdad
MFA Spokesman Murat Ozugergin
Director General for Research and Intelligence Aydin Sezgin
Cihad Erginay, Counsellor to the Minister

ANKARA 00000268 003 OF 003

Deputy Director General for Security Affairs Inan Ozyildiz

Deputy Director General for Iraq Affairs Yunus Demirer
Alper Yuksel, Department Head, Security Affairs

The meeting was conducted in English.

9. (U) USF-I Commanding General Odierno cleared this cable.

Jeffrey

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